

Vulnerabilities in Rural India

Surveys
by Collective of Field-based Organisations (RCRC)

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Context of RCRC's research work

- Coalitions comprising 65+ rural livelihoods focused CSOs working across 15 states; a large number work in tribal areas
- Mission : *“To generate real-time evidence on needs and challenges of rural India to enable informed action by CSOs, and policymakers.”*
- Three rounds of surveys in 2020 (May, July, December) coverage of 11000 – 17000 households
- Insights used for engagement with government and local administrators, inform NGO response and priority areas
- Moving forward, in the coming one year, plan to continue conducting these surveys more systematically
 - More systematic sampling at the village and household level, more resources for training and monitoring, formal partnerships with CSOs

Methodology/ Sampling

- In-person surveys across 3 rounds (May, July, Dec 2020), conducted by partner NGOs who were working in the blocks
 - Higher share of disadvantaged groups; e.g.- Adivasis (30-40% of the sample across rounds)
- Survey focus: food security, livelihood, liquidity, and role and reach of government schemes and services, especially for households with migrants (recognised as more vulnerable by organisations)
 - On employment and livelihood
 - Not to understand the status of unemployment or see it as an outcome
 - Purpose was to understand what primary activity the household is engaged in, with more details on issues faced by households with migrants travelling to cities
- Sample size: 11,000-17,000
- Geographical Coverage: 9 to 11 states, 64 to 80 districts, 125 to 169 blocks

Without any fixed total sample size, organisations were asked to sample HHs in the following way

- 5 Villages per Block
- 2 Blocks per district
- 100 respondents per Block
- Every 5th household, all hamlets

Was this process followed?

- Most likely not
 - Limited experience
 - Limited time for training and piloting
 - Limited capacity for quality control
 - Voluntary (better access, motivation and reach but less accountability to sampling strategy and processes)

NGOs were also asked to do some non-beneficiary households

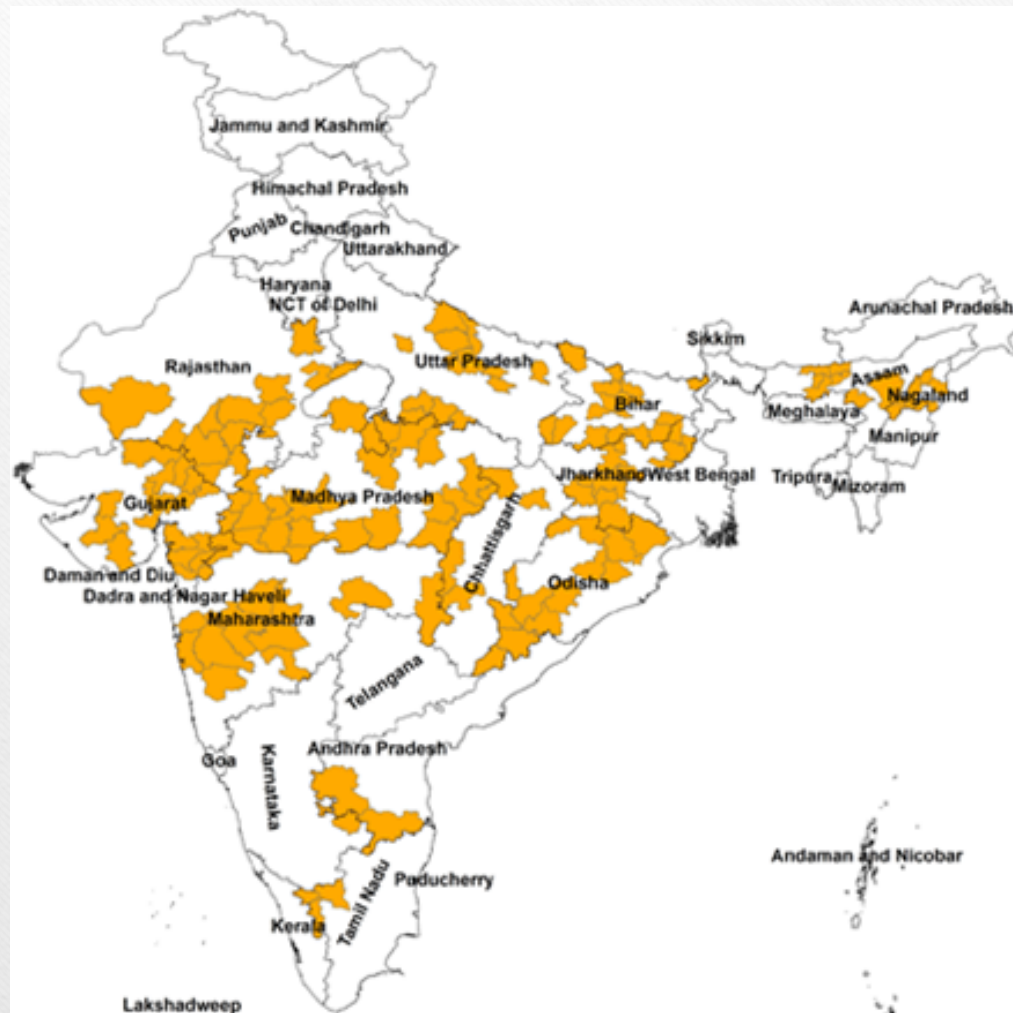
- Round 3 (December 2020): 64% “currently” working with the households, 12% worked in the past, 23% never worked

‘Who’ was the respondent?

- RCRC asked NGOs to do a mix of male and female respondents
- 63% female respondents in the latest round – did this help?

	May 2020	July 2020	December 2020
N	11380	17032	11766
Respondent (unit)	The questions were asked at the household level (NGOs were asked to have a mix of male and female respondents)		
Number of states	9	11	11
No. of organizations	44	45	43
% SC	25	17	21
% ST	31	41	34
% OBC	33	33	35
% Muslim	-	5	6
% hh with migrant(s) "Is any one of your family a migrant worker"	37	31	25
% hh with monthly income <5k	-	82 (current)	55 (2019) 74 (current)
% Toilet	-	-	53
% farmer	62("farming"+"wage labour in agri")		48 (primary occupation) 53 ("anyone a farmer")

Geographical location of NGOs and Sample



Findings on Livelihood, Jobs, Income (Dec 20- Jan 21)

- ~70% hhs reported loss in income (“has income reduced due to COVID”?)
 - Similar across social groups, higher for hhs with migrants (81%)
- ~20% reported loss of job during the pandemic (“has anyone in the family lost a job because of COVID”)
 - 36% among those with migrant(s) lost jobs
- 25% continued to cut down on food, higher for hhs with migrant
- 30% seeking loan (food, agricultural activities, health, etc.)
 - Higher among migrant households
- 57% among those who had returned to the village had gone back by the survey period (9 months since the first lockdown)
 - 60% of those still in the village wished to go back, these were relatively poorer households than those who had returned
- NREGA: 32% *tried* work, 56% *got* work
 - Among the poorest (<5k income) → Migrants more likely to try (43%) but less likely to get work (49%)

Some insights from conversations with NGOs

- Held individual and group webinars with organisations in Gujarat and Bihar
- Lack of demand for NREGA (Bihar)
 - Previous employment mattered --- e.g. Migrants who came from brick-kilns were interested in NREGA
 - Unavailability of 'skilled' work (e.g.- Muslim weavers and carpenters would not work in MGNREGA)
 - MGNREGA considered as a "low paid" activity
 - Physically strength needed and not matched with the skills
- Lack of demand for NREGA (Gujarat)
 - Unavailability of any work near the village and their previous experiences of not being able to secure work
 - Unavailability of 'individual' work and the local department did not want to initiate group works due to COVID
 - Could not afford the minimum 15 day wait period for wages to be credited
 - NGOs explained how some households were willing to work at even Rs.150 per day (or less) for instant payment
- These experiences also varied substantially across districts
 - E.g.- Kishanganj (Bihar) despite having sampled households with higher incomes were more affected in terms of cutting down on food and loan seeking because they were dependent on remittances

Question wording – Then and Now

OCCUPATION

Previous rounds:

- “What is the primary occupation of the household?” for all households
 - Farming, Wage Labour in Agriculture, Casual Labour in Non-Agri, Self Employed, Others specify
- “What is the migrant’s current engagement”
 - Agriculture harvest, collection of NTFP/MFP; Working on own field like levelling, bunding; Producing local items; working as casual labour or in MGNREGS
- “Type of occupation involved in [city]” for those with migrant members
 - Construction, Manufacturing, Shops, Agricultural/ livestock farms, Self-employed, Wage labour

Categories were not mutually exclusive, lack of proper definitions, difficult to ask at the household level (multiple interpretations, tough to reconcile if there is more than one migrant)

Question wording – Then and Now

OCCUPATION

Future round:

Asked to all members (roster)

- “What activity does the person spend most time (days) on during the year?”
 - Cultivation/farming on own land; Agricultural wage labour; Non-agri wage labour; Business; Animals rearing: Small ruminants rearing (goat, sheep, pigs, hens etc.); Large animals (cattle/buffaloes/camels), and fisheries; Collection of Minor forest produce; Salaried employment; Work in their own house; Not doing anything
- “What is the type of work you are employed in?”
 - Casual daily, Casual piece work, Contract < 1 yr, Regular/Permanent/ Longer contract, Own-account worker/self-employed, Pension Other
- “Type of principal source of income for last year of the household (source which gives the highest income)”
 - *Similar to activity categories (with addition of ‘remittances’, ‘pensions/rent/dividend’ as options)*

INCOME

Previous rounds

- Round 2: “What is the annual income of the household” (range)
- Round 2: “Has your income reduced due to Covid”
- Round 3: Monthly income of the household (pre-covid-2019) (range)
- Round 3: “Has your income reduced in last 9 months due to Covid”
- Round 3: “Current monthly income of the household” (range)

Limited training and Survey CTO functions and triggers may not have been fully leveraged

INCOME

Future round:

Asked to all members

- Did the individual have an independent source of income (other than joint household income activity) in the last 1 month”
 - Yes, No (Unemployed), but searching; No (Unemployed), not searching; NA; Other
- If unemployed and searching - since when?
- What is your average monthly income in the last 1 year (individual INDEPENDENT income)?

To Household

- Does the household receive any remittance income?
- What was the income of the household in the last 1 year?
 - Rs. _____ | Unit: Year or Month (*note: whatever the household is comfortable with*)

MIGRANTS IN THE HOUSEHOLD

Previous rounds

- “Is any one of your family a migrant worker”
- “How many months were the migrants away last year”

Problem: Confusion on what counts as a migrant worker, difficult to ask at the household level

Future round

- “Does this person work outside the village to earn money (in the last 1 year)?”
- “If person works outside the village, where does the person travel to?”
 - Other village, same district; Other district, same state; Other state, same country; Other country
- If person working outside the village, how frequently does the person return to the village?
 - Daily; weekly [returning every week]; > a week (7 days) and >3 months; <3 months and <6 months; >6 months

Questions and Suggestions

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